I Hope Your Child Becomes a Drug Addict
Because until it's your child, you won't understand mine.
By David Lee Condrey

Not because I want them to suffer.
Not because I wish you pain.
But because I want you to understand what love is.

Real love. Not the kind you hand out at soccer games or wrap around college acceptance letters. Not the love that beams with pride when your child does exactly what they're supposed to do. I'm talking about the love that stays when they don't. The kind that doesn't flinch when your kid steals from you, lies to your face, shows up gray and shaking at the door after disappearing for months.

I hope your child becomes a drug addict so you know what it means to hold someone who is both alive and vanishing at the same time.

So you understand that addiction isn't a failure of willpower or character. It's a language. A symptom. A survival strategy. It's not glamorous or tragic — it's just there, persistent and quiet, like grief that never got named.

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And here's the part you think doesn't apply to you:
Your child can become a drug addict even if you love them.
Even if you read to them at night and pack their lunch in biodegradable containers.
Even if you drive them to therapy and let them cry in the car.
Even if they go to a school with a mindfulness program and an organic salad bar.

Your daughter might dislocate her shoulder playing volleyball and get prescribed 30 Percocets after surgery. She'll take them exactly as directed, until the refill doesn't come — and she discovers that the withdrawals feel worse than the pain ever did. She finds someone at school with extras. A week later, she's crushing pills in the bathroom between classes, wondering how it got this far.

Your son might be the funny one. Charming. Everyone's favorite. But he can't make the voices slow down. The pressure. The expectations. One night at a party, someone hands him a Xanax and says, "This'll make everything feel slower." And it does. Until it doesn't. He graduates with honors, then disappears from Thanksgiving without explanation. You don't know he's living in a car.

Your kid might fall in love with someone broken. Try to fix them. Try to follow them. Try to survive their pain. And in doing so, drown in it. Not every addict was looking for oblivion. Some of us were just trying to stay close to someone we couldn't bear to lose.

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I hope your child becomes a drug addict so you finally stop looking at people like me with pity, disgust, or performative concern. So you understand that we're not what's broken. We are the proof that something else is.

Let your kid try fentanyl after a breakup. Watch them chase that relief so fast they forget what day it is. Watch how quickly the world stops calling them promising and starts calling them a problem.

Watch the way the system handles them.

Sit in a waiting room at 2 am while a nurse tries to revive your son. Listen to the clipboard questions: "Do they have insurance?" "Are they a harm to themselves or others?" "Are they willing to go to treatment?"

As if treatment isn't a revolving door. As if your child can be fixed by worksheets and a mattress in a group home that smells like bleach and despair. As if there's anything voluntary about wanting to die a little less.

I hope your child becomes a drug addict because maybe then you'll stop asking why people "choose" this life. Because maybe then you'll understand that some of us didn't choose drugs — we chose not to die, and drugs were the only thing that worked for a while.

And maybe — if you're lucky — your child will survive long enough to come back to you. Maybe they'll sit at your kitchen table, years later, sober but not healed, and try to explain who they became in those lost years. And maybe you won't interrupt. Maybe you'll finally shut the fuck up about "tough love" and "rock bottom" and "boundaries".

Maybe you'll just listen.
Because that's what we needed all along.

Not your judgment. Not your distance. Not your empty platitudes about consequences.
We needed witness. Presence. Someone who wouldn't look away when we got ugly.

I hope your child becomes a drug addict because this country doesn't change until it's personal. Until the overdose happens on your doorstep. Until your child's body is counted in the statistics.

There were 80,391 drug overdose deaths in the U.S. last year. That's 9 people every hour, of every day.

But maybe if your child is one of them, you'll finally stop believing this only happens to "those people." You'll realize there's no them. Just us.

The truth is, I don't actually want your child to become a drug addict.

I want your love to be tested.
I want your empathy to grow teeth.
I want your heart to be cracked open by something you cannot control, cannot save, cannot logic your way out of.

Because only then will you understand people like me.
Only then will you stop asking what's wrong with us, and start asking what's wrong with a world that creates so many of us.

So no — I don't want your child to become a drug addict.
I want you to love like someone who knows that they could.